



Finglass, P. J. (2005). Euripides, *Phoenissae* 1427–8. *Mnemosyne*, 58(4), 561–4. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4433687>

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication record in Explore Bristol Research](#)
PDF-document

This is the accepted author manuscript (AAM). The final published version (version of record) is available online via Brill at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4433687>. Please refer to any applicable terms of use of the publisher.

University of Bristol - Explore Bristol Research

General rights

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the reference above. Full terms of use are available: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-policy/pure/user-guides/ebr-terms/>

EURIPIDES, *PHOENISSAE* 1427-8

ἄκουε δὴ νυν καὶ τὰ πρὸς τούτοις κακά·
ἐπεὶ τέκνω πεσόντ' ἐλειπέτην βίον κτλ.

In line 1428 ἐπεὶ is attested only in a part of the mediaeval tradition. A variant reading ὥς γάρ is found in the manuscripts OAaPRRfRvWAt¹), and also occurs as a gloss in MB. There are no relevant papyri. Modern editors of the play (Wecklein 1901, Pearson 1909, Murray 1909, Powell 1911, Craik 1988, Mastronarde 1988 and 1994, Diggle 1994, Kovacs 2002) unanimously prefer the majority reading ἐπεὶ. Mastronarde justifies his decision by saying of ὥς γάρ that it “avoids asyndeton and so is probably secondary” (1994, 547 *ad loc.*). I have not found a discussion of the line by any of the other editors.

These lines come at the beginning of the scene's fourth messenger speech. There are many such speeches in Euripides,²), and the great majority of them begin with a sentence in asyndeton; these are introduced by ἐπεὶ (e.g. *Hel.* 1526, *Bacch.* 1043)³) or, less often, with a simple μέν (cf. *Hipp.* 1173, *Bacch.* 677). By contrast, Sophoclean messenger speeches regularly eschew asyndeton by beginning with γάρ (cf. *Aj.* 285, 749, *Ant.* 249, 407, *OR* 1241, *El.* 681, 893, *OC* 1587); only at *Tr.* 750 and 900 is γάρ absent⁴). The reasons for this striking difference between the approach of the two tragedians to the beginnings of these narratives have been well analysed by De Jong 1997, 180-1. She points out that in Sophocles, messengers precede their speeches with “a brief preamble in which they announce that they are about to recount a (truthful or shocking) tale” (p. 181; cf. e.g. *Aj.* 284 ἅπαν μαθήσῃ τοῦργον, ὥς κοινωνὸς ὢν, *El.* 680 κάπεμπόμην πρὸς ταῦτα καὶ τὸ πᾶν φράσω). These declarations are followed by γάρ because this particle is commonly found

“after an expression denoting the giving or receiving of information” (Denniston 1954, 59; cf. Braswell 1988, 161-2 on Pind. *P.* 4.70a). But in Euripides messengers rarely make such prefatory announcements: rather, they plunge straight into their narrative. Hence the absence of γάρ.

Three passages in Euripides diverge from this trend by using γάρ to open a messenger narrative. These are *Alc.* 158, *Hcl.* 800 and *IA* 1543. Yet these exceptions only serve to confirm the validity of De Jong’s analysis: for in each of these cases, the line with γάρ is immediately preceded by a ‘declaration of intent to narrate’ such as regularly occurs in the Sophoclean examples above. This preceding statement has caused Euripides to abandon his usual asyndetic practice at the opening of the speech. There is, however, a further instance of such a preceding declaration in a Euripidean messenger speech: namely *Phoen.* 1427-8, the passage which we are discussing here. Here the imperative ἄκουε fulfils exactly the same function as the second person future indicatives in Soph. *Aj.* 284, Eur. *Alc.* 157 and so on: it directs the listener’s attention to the narrative which is to follow. As such, the typology of the openings of such speeches strongly suggests that we need a γάρ in 1428 to follow this imperative.

Defenders of the vulgate could object that the three Euripidean exceptions all begin ἐπεὶ γάρ, not ὥς γάρ. Yet the crucial point is not the ἐπεὶ (which, as we have seen, does not even begin all the ‘regular’ Euripidean messenger speeches), but the presence of the connecting particle. ὥς in a temporal sense is unremarkable (cf. Schwyzler 1934-71, ii. 665 §8), and is common in Euripides (cf. Allen and Italie 1954, 684 col. i. II(d)). As we would expect, there are many instances from messenger speeches (cf. e.g. *Hec.* 546, *Andr.* 1152, *HF* 991, *Phoen.* 1143, *Bacch.* 691). Soph. *OC* 1587 has ὥς μὲν γάρ in a messenger speech after an initial indication of the messenger’s intent to narrate, while *Ant.* 407 and *OR* 1241 use ὅπως γάρ in the same function. ὥς γάρ is also used to introduce narratives in comic drama: cf. Ar. *Plut.* 653, Eubulus fr. 112.1

Hunter = 111.1 Kassel–Austin. There it tends to be preceded not by a ‘declaration of intent to narrate’ proper, but by a *gnome* or brief summary of the action which is about to be narrated (cf. Fraenkel 1912, 48-52). Yet given the strong influence that tragic messenger speeches have on these comic narratives⁵), it is at least possible that the comic examples point back to some tragic instances of ὥς γάρ at the beginning of now-lost messenger speeches. We can conclude that the presence of ὥς instead of ἐπεὶ is no argument against the adoption of this reading.

There is only one passage in Euripides which could lend support to the vulgate text. In Orestes’ messenger-like speech at Eur. *IT* 939-86 we find at 940 a clause opening with ἐπεὶ but without γάρ, which comes after a line that expresses Orestes’ ‘intent to narrate’. If the text of this passage is secure, then it provides an exception to the pattern outlined above, and keeps the possibility open that ἐπεὶ is the right reading at *Phoen.* 1427. On the other hand, the weight of the evidence still points strongly in the other direction. We may not be dealing with an unbreakable rule: but unbreakable rules are rare in textual criticism, and there is certainly a powerful tendency here which makes γάρ the more likely alternative in our passage. Furthermore, we must not forget that the text of the *IT* relies on a single manuscript. If the textual tradition of that play were as rich as that of the *Phoenissae*, we could easily have found a ὥς γάρ variant in that passage too. After all, corruption of ὥς γάρ into ἐπεὶ would not be difficult: ἐπεὶ is so often used to introduce messenger speeches in Euripides that it could easily have ousted the less familiar ὥς γάρ.

Mastronarde objected to ὥς γάρ (1994, 547 *ad* 1427) on the grounds that it was probably a later alteration designed to avoid asyndeton. Yet if this were true, we might expect to find the phrase as a minority variant in at least some of the many Euripidean messenger speeches which open with ἐπεὶ in asyndeton. Yet we never do. It seems more than coincidental that such a variant could have arisen in the one instance where a γάρ would in fact make sense according to De Jong’s

analysis as outlined above. The reverse corruption of ὥς γάρ to ἐπεὶ seems in fact the easier to account for, as noted above in connexion with *IT* 940.

The above argument can scarcely claim to have far-reaching consequences for our interpretation of Euripides' play. But if correct, it provides a small but nevertheless satisfying instance of how an advance made by a scholar best-known for her work on the relatively new field of narratology may help to shed light on an ancient and venerable discipline such as textual criticism.⁶⁾

All Souls College
University of Oxford
OX1 4AL
United Kingdom
patrick.finglass@all-souls.ox.ac.uk

P. J. FINGLASS

1) The list of manuscripts is taken from Mastronarde and Bremer 1982, 351. Mastronarde 1988, 106 (abbreviated at *id.* 1994, 119) lists all of these apart from At, which he does not regularly cite (cf. 1988, XLVI). Diggle 1994, 160 lists OPRRfW, since he does not regularly cite At, Aa or Rv (cf. 1994, 72). On the importance of some of these manuscripts, many of which sometimes preserve the truth against the majority of the tradition, see Mastronarde and Bremer 1982, 74-5.

2) See De Jong 1991, 179 for a list.

3) See Rijksbaron 1976, 294 for more examples and brief discussion.

4) Schaefer's conjecture ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἦλθε for transmitted ἐπεὶ παρῆλθε would make this instance conform more closely to the usual Sophoclean pattern: see however Davies 1990, 212 *ad loc.* for a defence of the paradosis.

5) Cf. Fraenkel 1912, 48 ("Haec vero soliloquia secundum nuntiorum narrationes facta"), 1912, 52-3 ("lucide apparuisse opinor, quae ratio inter haec soliloquia tragicasque nuntiorum narrationes intercedat"), Lamagna 1998, 248 on Men. *Sam.* 219 ("Demea costruisce il suo monologo come farebbe un ἄγγελος in tragedia").

6) I am grateful to Professor Christopher Collard and to Mnemosyne's anonymous referee for helpful comments.

REFERENCES

- Allen, J.T., Italie, G. 1954. *A Concordance to Euripides* (London, Berkeley, Los Angeles).
- Braswell, B.K. 1988 (comm.). *A Commentary on the Fourth Pythian Ode of Pindar* (Berlin).
- Craik, E.M. 1988 (ed.) (comm.) (transl.). *Euripides: Phoenician Women* (Warminster).
- Davies, M. 1991 (comm.). *Sophocles: Trachiniae* (Oxford).
- De Jong, I.J.F. 1991. *Narrative in Drama: the Art of the Euripidean Messenger-Speech* (Leiden, New York, Copenhagen, Cologne).
- 1997. Γάρ introducing *Embedded Narratives*, in: Rijksbaron, A. (ed.), *New Approaches to Greek Particles* (Amsterdam), 175-85.
- Denniston, J.D. 1954. *The Greek Particles*² (rev. K.J. Dover; Oxford).
- Diggle, J. 1994 (ed.). *Euripidis. Fabulae. Tomus III: Helena. Phoenissae, Orestes, Bacchae, Iphigenia Aulidensis, Rhesus* (Oxford).
- Fraenkel, E.D.M. 1912. *De media et nova comoedia quaestiones selectae* (Göttingen).
- Hunter, R.L. 1983 (ed.). *Eubulus: the Fragments* (Cambridge).
- Kassel, R., Austin, C.F.L. 1983– (eds.). *Poetae Comici Graeci* (8 vols. to date; Berlin).
- Kovacs, D. 2002 (ed.) (transl.). *Euripides: Helen, Phoenician Women, Orestes* (London and Cambridge, Mass.).
- Lamagna, M. 1998 (ed.) (comm.). *La Donna di Samo* (Naples).
- Mastronarde, D.J. 1988 (ed.). *Euripides: Phoenissae* (Leipzig).
- 1994 (ed.) (comm.). *Euripides: Phoenissae* (Cambridge).
- Mastronarde, D.J., Bremer, J.M. 1982. *The Textual Tradition of Euripides' Phoinissai* (California).
- Murray, G. 1909 (ed.). *Euripidis. Fabulae. Tomus III: Helena. Phoenissae, Orestes, Bacchae, Iphigenia Aulidensis, Rhesus* (Oxford).
- Pearson, A.C. 1909 (ed.) (comm.). *Euripides. The Phoenissae* (Leipzig).
- Powell, J.U. 1911 (ed.) (comm.). *Εὐριπίδου Φοίνισσαι. The Phoenissae* (London).
- Rijksbaron, A. 1976. *How Does a Messenger Begin his Speech? Some Observations on the Opening Lines of Euripidean Messenger Speeches*, in: Bremer, J.M., Radt, S.L., Ruijgh, C.J. (eds.), *Miscellanea Tragica in Honorem J.C. Kamerbeek* (Amsterdam), 293-308.
- Schwyzler, E. 1934-71. *Griechische Grammatik. Auf der Grundlage von Karl Brugmanns griechischer Grammatik* (4 vols.; rev. A. Debrunner; Munich).
- Wecklein, N. 1901 (ed.). *Euripidis Phoenissae* (Leipzig).